

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 USPS-01 EB-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03

H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-15 /073 W

----- 101850

R 181336Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9442

INFO DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE WASHDC

UNCLAS PORT AU PRINCE 0619

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, HA

SUBJECT: STAMP SCANDAL INVESTIGATION: LEGAL PREPARATION BEGINS

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 576 (NOTAL)

1. NEW ARRESTS - LE MATIN IN ITS MARCH 16-17 EDITION REVEALED FOR FIRST TIME THAT FORMER COMMERCE SECRETARY SERGE FOURCAND AND HIS FATHER NOE FOURCAND WERE DETAINED IN CONNECTION WITH THE POSTAGE STAMP SCANDAL (REFTEL), SAYING THAT THERE HAD BEEN "IMPORTANT ARRESTS" MADE MARCH 15, FOR A TOTAL OF THIRTEEN SO FAR. HOWEVER, LE MATIN SOFTENED IMPACT OF THIS NEWS BY DESCRIBING FOURCAND AS "THE BRILLIANT ECONOMIST" AND HIS FATHER AS "THE EMINENT LAWYER", AND QUICKLY ADDED THAT IT IS TOO SOON TO ASSUME THAT ALL THE PERSONS

BEING DETAINED WILL BE CHARGED WITH COMPLICITY IN THE AFFAIR, MERELY THAT THEY ARE BEING RETAINED TO HELP WITH THE INQUIRY. QUOTE. THE CHIEF FOR LIFE WISHES TO SURROUND THE INQUIRY AND ITS FOLLOW-UP WITH MAXIMUM, SERIOUS IMPARTIALITY SO THAT NOBODY WILL SAY THAT A PARODY OF JUSTICE IS BEING PREPARED AND THAT THE PROSPECTIVE TRIAL WILL BE INVALID ON THE SAME BASIS. THIS IS WHY HE ASKED THOSE IN CHARGE OF FINDING THE WRONG-DOERS TO USE ALL THE MEANS LIKELY TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS. IT INVOLVES THE REPUTATION AND THE GOOD REPUTE OF THE JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES, THE HONOR UNCLASSIFIED

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OF THOSE BEING INTERROGATED AND ABOVE ALL THE PRESTIGE AND CREDIT

OF OUR COUNTRY IN THE EYES OF COMPATRIOTS, THE UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION AND IN THE WORLD PRESS. END QUOTE.

2. RIGHTS RESPECTED - THE SEMI-OFFICIAL LE NOUVEAU MONDE AND LE MATIN REITERATED THAT PRESIDENT DUVALIER INTENDED TO HONOR THE RIGHTS AND REPUTATION OF THE DETAINEES, SAYING THAT HE SOUGHT TO KEEP THE HAITIAN AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES FULLY INFORMED, TO REMAIN FAITHFUL TO HIS PROMISES AND TO HIS AMBITION TO RESTORE THE DIGNITY OF JUSTICE TO HIS COUNTRY, AND TO PUT AN END TO THE PROPENSITY OF SOME PEOPLE TO ENRICH THEMSELVES AT THE DETRIMENT OF THE PEOPLE, TAXPAYERS, AND MORAL PRESTIGE OF THEIR COUNTRY. IT SAID THE DETAINEES RETAINED THEIR LEGAL RIGHTS; JUSTICE WILL BE HUMANE AND IMPARTIAL, MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE FOR WHOEVER NEEDS IT, AND NO ACTS ARE BEING TAKEN AGAINST THE DETAINEES' "DIGNITY AS MEN".

3. NEW LEGAL PHASE IN INQUIRY - LE NOUVEAU MONDE AND LE MATIN ALSO REPORTED THAT ON MARCH 15 THE INVESTIGATION MOVED INTO A NEW LEGAL PHASE OF TAKING FORMAL TESTIMONY BEFORE JUSTICE OF THE PEACE ROSARION AND GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONER CASIMIR. THE PRESS REMINDED ITS READERS THAT THE PREPARATION OF TESTIMONY AND EVIDENCE FOR THE INSTRUCTION JUDGE (WHO PERFORMS A ROLE SIMILAR TO A GRAND JURY IN THE US) IS ALWAYS DONE IN SECRET.

4. RUMORS DECRIED - LE MATIN DECRIED RUMORS THAT SEVERAL HAITIANS IMPLICATED IN THE SCANDAL HAD FLED THE COUNTRY SINCE JEANTY'S PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT MARCH 8, AND OTHER RUMORS THAT SEVERAL FORMER EMPLOYEES OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY HAD BEEN ARRESTED. BOTH LE MATIN AND LE NOUVEAU MONDE EXPRESSED UNDERSTANDING OF THE PUBLIC'S DESIRE TO LEARN THE NAMES OF THE THIRTEEN PERSONS DETAINED, BUT REPEATED THAT NOTHING FURTHER COULD BE MADE PUBLIC ON THE AFFAIR FOR THE TIME BEING.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, FRAUDS, COUNTERFEITING, POSTAGE STAMPS, INVESTIGATIONS, ARRESTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975PORTA00619
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750094-0902
From: PORT AU PRINCE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750340/aaaabjyw.tel
Line Count: 94
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 PORT AU PRINCE 576
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: hartledg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17 JUN 2003 by SilvaL0>; APPROVED <20 FEB 2004 by hartledg>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: STAMP SCANDAL INVESTIGATION: LEGAL PREPARATION BEGINS
TAGS: PGOV, HA, (FOURCAND, SERGE), (FOURCAND, NOE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006